

## CLAIMS

1. A method for facilitating online commercial transactions of commerce

items for sale through an online merchant system, comprising the steps of:

homogenizing a plurality of commerce item information feeds delivered

5 over a backbone network and originating from distinct online entities, each of the plurality of commerce item information feeds comprising a plurality of commerce item information packets that associated with particular commerce items for sale from the distinct online entities;

associating a product identifier with each commerce item information

10 packet, the product identifier reflecting similarities between the commerce items; and

within an aggregate database, storing the commerce item information

packets together with the associated product identifiers.

15 2. The method in Claim 1, wherein:

the step of homogenizing a plurality of commerce item information feeds

further comprises the steps of:

parsing each of the plurality of commerce item information feeds to detect distinct commerce information packets within each feed, and

mapping the distinct commerce information packets into the schema for the aggregate database.

**3.** The method of Claim 1, wherein:

each commerce item information packet comprises a set of commerce item information elements selected from the group of elements consisting of; a price element, an image element, a description element, or a stock keeping unit element.

**4.** The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of;

enabling access, querying, and retrieval of commerce item information from the aggregate database via a user interface; and recording commerce metrics related to the online activity of commerce item information within the aggregate database.

**5.** The method of Claim 4, wherein:

online activity of commerce item information consists of an online activity selected from the group consisting of; user queries of the aggregate database retrieving commerce item information and merchant system advertising

initiated queries of the aggregate database to retrieve commerce item information for online advertising purposes.

6. The method in Claim 1, wherein:

5 the product identifier further comprises a commerce item information tag.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein:

10 each commerce item information tag comprises at least a portion that is unique and associated with the online entity originating the commerce item information feed.

8. The method of Claim 6, further comprising:

15 enabling access, querying, and retrieval of commerce item information from the aggregate database via a user interface; and recording commerce metrics related to a user retrieval of commerce item information tags from the aggregate database.

9. The method of Claim 8, wherein:

commerce metrics comprises at least one of the metrics selected from the group consisting of; the number user aggregate database queries retrieving the commerce item information associated with the commerce item information tag, the temporal aspects related to User database queries retrieving the commerce item information associated with the commerce item information tag, aggregate database retrievals initiated by the online merchant system for advertisement related purposes.

10. The method of Claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

reporting the commerce metrics to at least the online entity that originated the commerce item information associated with the commerce item information tag.

11. A system for quantizing the effectiveness of advertising using an online merchant system that facilitates commercial transactions involving commerce items, comprising:

a commerce item information receiving system that is accessible by at least one online entity that may interface with the commerce item information system to deliver a data feed comprised of plurality of commerce item information packets that relate to commerce items that can be shopped for by online users

via the online merchant system, the commerce item information receiving system under hardware and software control to,

receive, map and store each commerce item information packet into an aggregate database using a common commerce item information format, and

5                   associate a commerce item information tag to each commerce item information packet stored within the aggregate database; the system for quantizing the effectiveness of advertising also including,

10                   a commerce metric recording system that records commerce metrics reflecting related to the online activity regarding any particular commerce item by recording queries of the aggregate database returning a specific unit of commerce item information and the associated commerce item information tag.

**12.**    The system in Claim 11, wherein:

15                   the reporting system further enables reporting commerce metrics to an online entity selected from the group of entities consisting of; an online service provider or an online vendor.

**13.**    The system of Claim 11, wherein:

commerce metrics comprises at least one of the metrics selected

from the group consisting of; the number user aggregate database queries  
retrieving the commerce item information associated with the commerce item  
information tag, the temporal aspects related to User database queries retrieving  
the commerce item information associated with the commerce item information  
tag, aggregate database retrievals initiated by the online merchant system for  
advertisement related purposes.

14. The system of Claim 11, wherein:

the commerce item information tag further comprises a product  
identifier, the product identifier generated according to a methodology that  
reflects similarities in commerce item information.

15. The system of Claim 14, wherein:

the methodology for generating product identifiers for association  
with the commerce item information in the aggregate database generates product  
identifiers that also reflect the differences in commerce item information.

16. A commerce item information tagging system for use in an online  
merchant system, the online merchant system including; a system for  
homogenizing the format of received commerce item information from at least  
two distinct online entities, an aggregate database for storing the homogenized

commerce item information, and a user interface that accesses the aggregate database for query and retrieval of competitive commerce item information from the online entities and displays it within a user's Web browser window; the commerce item information tagging system comprising;

5 a mechanism for associating commerce item information tags with the

commerce item information received from the distinct online entities; and

the commerce item information tag comprising a unique sequence of elements associated with the online entity that originated the commerce item information.

10 **17.** The commerce item information tagging system of Claim 16, wherein:

the commerce item information tag further comprises a product identifier generated according to a methodology that reflects similarities in commerce item information.

15 **18.** The commerce item information tagging system of Claim 17, wherein:

the methodology generates product identifiers that also reflect the differences in commerce item information.

19. The commerce item information tagging system of Claim 16, further comprising:

a commerce metric recording system that records each query of the aggregate database retrieving a commerce item information tag.

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20. The commerce item information tagging system of Claim 19, wherein:

queries of the aggregate database consist of queries selected from the group consisting of; user initiated aggregate database queries retrieving commerce item information and the associated commerce item information tag, and software initiated aggregate database queries for advertising purposes that retrieve commerce item information and the associated commerce item information tag.

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